



PALLISTER, Marie Le Caux (nee van Schalkwijk)

Marie PALLISTER | 21 Feb 1917

MARIE LE CAUX¹ VAN SCHALKWIJK was born on 21 February 1917 in Standerton, Transvaal, South Africa. She married GEOFFREY FLEMMER PALLISTER on 18 February 1937 in Brakpan, Transvaal, South Africa, son of EDWARD PALLISTER and EMMA FLEMMER. EMMA BETTY MARTHA⁶ FLEMMER (TOGER ABO AUGUST⁵) was born on 12 June 1876 in Cradock, Cape, South Africa and died on 24 April 1908 in Cradock, Cape, South Africa. She married EDWARD PALLISTER on 26 January 1907 in Cradock, Cape, South Africa. He was born on 6 January 1879 in York, England.

I was born in Standerton, Transvaal, on 21 February 1917, when the news of World War I was at its worst. My mothers' youngest brother, John Le Caux Balleine Payn, had already died (of Meningitis I think). I was named after him. She adored him. He was very musical, as was my mother. My mother and father were married in Tsoko, Transkei on her birthday 23 January 1912 or 1913, not sure. They met on board the "Kenelworth Castle" on the way to England in 1906 and fell in love, and wrote for 6-7 years. You can imagine the horror of her and his family so shortly after the Anglo Boer War. Anyhow as Kipling said, "That's another story".

In 1919 my father moved to Graaf-Reinet, my very beloved hometown. I went to the Afrikaans school, the first Afrikaans medium High School on the Platteland. My father was in partnership with Dr. Carl Bremmer, later Minister of Health under Dr. Malan's Government. His wife was a Scot!! Almost as strange a marriage as my parents. Anyhow it continues...

I met Geoff Pallister in my Matric year. That is also a somewhat romantic and strange story. We fell in love and I went to U.C.T. very reluctantly. He had a farm in a hamlet called "Petersburg" on the way to Somerset East - older than Graaf-Reinet. He sold that on advice of a "friend" and bought a larger one north of Graaf-Reinet. There he went bust. Went in a sort of partnership with an older man, very charming and shrewd etc. who took him for a ride and left him with debts he knew nothing about. This was the depression and a five-year drought in the Karoo. He lost everything and went to Boksburg, east of Johannesburg to try and get into the gold mines like so many other young farmers. 50 men looking for jobs, terrible! Eventually just after we married he got into the E.R.P.M at £9-17-6 per month. As he had education he was an official. We paid 4 pounds for a room and managed. I was up there on a visit and told him if we didn't marry there and then the engagement was off. The poor man had to choose. He told me everyone would blame him, as he was 9 and a half years older. Well, we got married in front of a magistrate 3 days before I turned 20. I said I was 25. I had long hair and looked much older than I was. No I.D.'s in those days. Of course he was blamed and all Graaf-Reinet naturally thought it was a shotgun affair. I never knew that until after my first visit home 2 years later with my first baby. My parents were wonderful, after all we had known one another for over 3 years, so!!

Having been brought up on a farm he loathed the mine - a very deep dangerous mine. He was buried twice by rock falls. On his return from the Middle East; he was gassed on his first shift back.

Eventually we bought a small farm and I ran the dairy. I'm always glad my 3 children had a few years on a farm. Gives them a different value. Then Geoff had a bad appendix op. He was told not to go underground for some time. He got a temporary job on an asbestos mine on the edge of the Kalahari Desert in Bechuanaland. He became acting manager. Our children were sent to Union High School in Graaf-Reinet. I taught the youngest for 2 and a half years. They couldn't come home for short vacations, as it was 2 and a half days in the train. Then we were transferred to Barberton to develop a small asbestos mine there. +- 15 miles out of town. I kept my kids at school in Graaf-Reinet as the change of province had originally been bad. Geoff became an authority on SHORT FIBRE ASBESTOS and was sent to other mines to do prospecting. We were sent to Alldays Northern Transvaal for some years. Then retired to a small farm on the foothills of Barberton Mountains. Beautiful country. My 2 daughters went to Rhodes University. My son first went to Saldanha Bay to the Naval Gymnasium, as he was only 16, then on to WITS in Johannesburg where he did very well in engineering. Geoff snr died in Johannesburg while we were on a visit, after a 2-week illness in 1983, 20th August, my son's birthday. I still miss him every day. He was full of "hang ups" due to strange childhood, but such a fine, honest man. But, like my own father - a very bad businessman. I remained on the farm for 9 years after his death, looked after by a huge Swazi family. Then came to Port Elizabeth first to my daughter and then to this old-age home.

I could write book about my life and experiences. Living at close quarters with Tswanas, Vendas, Shangaans, Swazi's, and Pedi's. Geoff always said he preferred the blacks to whites. He was so good to them, as was my Afrikaans father. I used to do quite a bit of writing, articles, short stories etc. in Afrikaans and English. I used to chain-smoke 50 Springbok cigarettes a day, but when I gave up smoking in 1976, I couldn't write without a cigarette in my hand.